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PREPARATION AND USE OF ADMINISTRATIVE MANUALS

What is an administrative manual, and how does it differ from other procedural manuals? What should be included in an administrative manual? How should it be prepared?

Many administrative policies, procedures, and regulations deal with general matters that affect all city departments for an indefinite period of time. These matters should be recorded in permanent form as a reference for department heads and supervisors. Even the smallest cities will find it desirable to bring this material together as a source of reference for everyone in the organization.

The easiest and most useful way to bring this material together is to compile an administrative manual. Such a manual is particularly useful for the inclusion of administrative regulations and policy statements that are not reflected in city ordinances or in other legal and administrative documents.

Some Definitions

It is the purpose of this report to describe what an administrative manual is and how one can be compiled. Before doing so, however, it is essential to provide definitions and explanations of interrelated legal and administrative concepts.

Administrative Code. The subject matter of an administrative code is contained in the city charter, its statutory law, in a series of ordinances, or in all three. The code brings these materials together and grants authority to the chief administrator and department heads to put into effect certain functions without further formal referral to the city council. The code goes into more detail than does the city charter in outlining the major structure of administrative organization, in establishing departments and offices, in listing the functions of departments, and in specifying the duties and responsibilities of chief officials. It is in effect the structural framework for the city government expressed in legal terms.

Administrative Regulations. As the term is generally understood, administrative regulations establish and interpret activities and procedures that affect more than one city department. Administrative regulations are subordinate to municipal ordinances and generally cover employee activities, working conditions, public relations, internal communications, and other matters that do not require formal authorization from the city council. They are not intended to cover matters that are solely or primarily of concern to one department. Such regulations, as for example, police department regulations, are expected to be compiled and issued by the department concerned.¹

Administrative Manual. The administrative manual is a useful and convenient device for the formal compilation of administrative regulations and other policy statements that are needed for the effective functioning of all or most departments. It serves as a comprehensive guide for administrative action and contains considerably more detail than is found in the administrative code.

¹For more detailed information see section on "Administrative Codes, Rules, and Regulations," *The Technique of Municipal Administration* (Chicago: International City Managers' Association, 4th ed., 1958), pp. 89-91; MIS Report No. 52, *The Preparation and Use of Administrative Codes*, May, 1948; and MIS Report No. 85, *Issuing Administrative Regulations*, February, 1951.

Stated another way, the administrative manual includes those regulations and policy statements not otherwise covered in other manuals — police manual, personnel manual, budget manual, and the like. The amount of detail in the administrative manual varies with the subjects covered, the particular needs of the chief administrator and department heads, the size of the city, and the form, content, and level of detail in the city charter and supplementary ordinances.

Special Manuals. Many cities have issued manuals of service-wide applicability for personnel management, budget preparation, purchasing, and other matters. The personnel manual is common to many cities and is well known. Its primary purpose is to contain all personnel regulations, as adopted by the chief administrator or other authority, together with sample forms and explanations for certification, notification of appointment, transfer, and other personnel actions. The budget manual, equally well known, is the guide to departments and supervisors for preparation of revenue and expenditure estimates. Sample forms almost always are included.²

Departmental Manuals. Many city departments find the need for manuals to govern their own internal operations in matters that do not directly concern other departments. The best known example is the police manual which has been issued in many cities in the United States. Other examples of departmental manuals include the accounting manual, issued by the finance department; the zoning manual, issued by the planning department; the fire inspection manual, issued by the fire department; and the engineering manual, issued by the public works department.³

Content of the Administrative Manual

The primary purpose of an administrative manual is to compile administrative regulations in a form that is convenient, accurate, and current. The administrative manual also serves smaller cities by providing a convenient location for personnel regulations, purchasing procedures, and the like.

This report is based on administrative manuals issued by six cities: Covina (20,124), Monrovia (27,079), and Richmond (71,854), California; Wichita, Kansas (254,698); Winston-Salem, North Carolina (111,135); and Waco, Texas (97,808).

The Richmond, Waco, and Wichita manuals are solely or largely devoted to general administrative regulations. Wichita's refers to other service-wide manuals: safety manual, personnel manual, budget manual, manual for complaint handling, and cash handling manual.

The Covina manual is largely devoted to budgeting, purchasing, and personnel procedures — matters that in a larger city would be covered by separate manuals. The other portions of the Covina manual deal with office procedures, use of the city council chambers, city council agenda, accounting, property control, and miscellaneous subjects.

The Monrovia and Winston-Salem manuals take a position in between by covering some personnel and financial procedures as well as subjects covered by administrative regulations.

The administrative manual issued by Monrovia is a good example of a representative manual. The manual is divided into six sections: administration and organization; public relations; financial administration; personnel administration; public works and utilities; and general and miscellaneous. Appendix A is a detailed listing of the table of contents of the Monrovia manual.

Although no absolute rules can be set down on the determination of the contents of an administrative manual, some broad generalizations can be made. The following are the major areas which should be considered for coverage in a manual.

1. Introductory Material. This should include a statement of the legal authority for the manual, its purpose, and its contents. The Wichita manual states:

² See MIS Report No. 158, *Preparation of the Budget Manual*, March, 1957; and MIS Report No. 159, *Preparation of the Purchasing Manual*, April, 1957.

³ One of the most widely used departmental manuals is described in MIS Report No. 206, *Preparation of a Police Manual*, March, 1961.

The Administrative Policy Manual has been developed in response to a definite need long evident within the City of Wichita administrative organization.

Although much of the City's administrative policies and procedures have been compiled in various manuals and handbooks, these are usually limited to a group of policies dealing with a specific subject (e.g., Personnel). The Administrative Policy Manual is comprised of policy and procedural statements which are of a general nature, usually having city-wide application.

Prior to this date, these general policies and procedures have been issued by Department Head Letters. Henceforth, Department Head Letters will be reserved for the issuance of instructions or procedures which are of nonpermanent nature (e.g., 1962 Budget Procedure) or a point of information (e.g., Away from the Office). A new letter form, entitled Administrative Policy, will be issued when a policy or procedure has been developed which can be considered as permanent or standing until superseded or rescinded by the City Manager. As these Administrative Policies are issued, they are to be retained in the Administrative Policy Manual by the Department and division heads.

Incorporated into this material are the City of Wichita Administrative Organization Charts for the current year, Administrative Regulations, and an emergency telephone and address listing for the Board of City Commissioners and various city personnel. These will be revised and reissued from time to time as it becomes necessary.

It is hoped that the change of procedures accompanying the issuance of the Administrative Policy Manual will enable the departments of the city to keep better informed of the various policies necessary to meet the goal of an effective and efficient city government.

2. Definitions. Misunderstandings will be minimized by the use of definitions.

3. Organization. The general organization of the city might be outlined, and the functions and inter-relationships of each department can be detailed. A general organization chart should be included.

4. City Council. Relationships between council and administrative departments are of vital importance to the success of city programs. It is important that key officials have written instructions on council agenda, attendance of department heads at council meetings, the preparation and submission of ordinances, and follow-up on council orders.

5. Budget and Expenditure Control. Budget preparation and expenditure control, including procedures and sample forms, should be covered unless provided for in a separate manual.

6. Purchasing. Regulations, procedures, and forms to be used in ordering supplies and equipment should be included unless covered by a separate purchasing manual.

7. Personnel Regulations. This could include such topics as rest periods, vacation and sick leave, and promotion policies and procedures. These should be included unless provided for by a separate personnel manual.

8. Communications. A section on communications could include regulations on department heads' reports to the manager, correspondence and letter heads, interoffice memos, mail and messenger service, central duplicating service, and use of the telephone.

9. Motor Vehicle Regulations. This might include rules on the use of the city car pool, assignment of city cars, car allowances, and the taking of city-owned cars to employees' homes.

10. Travel Regulations. Although local government officials are less concerned with this aspect than state or federal officials who have a wider geographical area to serve, regulations on this topic are appropriate to an administrative manual. They include attendance at out-of-town meetings and conferences, expense accounts, travel allowances, and travel advances.

11. Safety. This is an area which is of increasing concern to local governments. The manual could include regulations on employee safety programs, safety committees, and accidents involving city-owned vehicles.

12. Public Relations. This could include such topics as speeches by city officials, press releases, handling complaints (Appendix B), and interdepartmental service requests.

13. Personal Conduct. The acceptance of gifts and rewards, conflict of interest, and participation in partisan political campaigns might well be covered under this topic. Some cities will have

these rules enacted in the form of ordinances — they could still, however, be reprinted for inclusion in the administrative manual.

Each city which contemplates the development of an administrative manual must decide for itself what is most appropriate to include in it. Generally speaking, however, the material to be included should be of city-wide applicability and of a broad, general nature. Certain aspects of purchasing, budgeting, public relations, and personnel lend themselves readily to this type of manual.

An administrative manual is not aimed at satisfying the need for information among rank and file employees. An employee handbook is the appropriate vehicle for lower level employees. In small and medium-sized communities, the administrative manual is developed for the use of top officials; i.e., department heads, their assistants, and immediate deputies. In larger cities the administrative manual will be of use to all officials in a supervisory capacity. It can, in fact, be a useful instrument for training first-line supervisors for higher positions, and in preparing them for promotional examinations.

Who Should Prepare the Manual?

An administrative manual is prepared under the direction of the chief administrator to cover details common to all or most departments. Responsibility for the preparation of a general manual might well be assigned to the city manager's administrative assistant. In any case the person preparing the manual should be thoroughly familiar with the operating procedures of the city. The manual should reflect also the judgments of many minds as to its suitability for use in the city. Department heads, supervisory personnel, and outstanding employees can contribute to the development of such a manual and thus help to insure its usefulness on a day-to-day basis.

Not all manuals need to be prepared under the direction of the chief administrator. Department heads should be expected to develop their own procedure and practice manuals for matters of concern to their departments. All rules to be included in a departmental manual must, of course, be submitted to the chief administrator for approval.

Like the general administrative manual, the departmental manual can profit from the ideas contributed by employees in the department. MIS Report No. 206, *Preparation of a Police Manual*, has outlined four types of employees who can contribute to the development of such a manual: in-service training personnel; staff personnel; personnel with special training; and personnel with outstanding work records.

Compiling the Manual

The first step in preparing a manual is to compile all regulations that are in effect. Many of these will have been written out in memorandum form.

The second step is to weed out contradictory and obsolete regulations. Care should be exercised to eliminate rules which employees are perfectly competent to decide for themselves. Excessive rules destroy resourcefulness, cause needless irritation to city employees, and reduce the speed and effectiveness of governmental action. In some cases uniformity has no practical value whatsoever, and such cases should not be covered by manual rules just to make the manual complete.

Rules to be included in the manual should be subjected to the review and advice of department heads and their supervisory personnel. A preliminary draft might well be subjected to a trial period of use by supervisors in orientation and training sessions. It is only through experience that a useful manual will be developed.

The third step in manual compilation is to rewrite any regulations that are not stated in simple, clear, and understandable English. There is no need for complicated legalisms in a manual of instructions for city employees. An example of a brief, easily-read regulation is included in the administrative manual for the city of Waco:

Commencing June 30, 1959, pay checks will be distributed to Department Heads on the morning of the 15th and the morning of the last day of each month, except in cases when the 15th or last day of the month falls on a Saturday or Sunday. When the 15th or last day falls on Saturday or Sunday checks will be distributed after 2:00 p.m. on the preceding Friday.

In no event will checks be distributed earlier; therefore, employees should be notified immediately so that they may make their financial arrangements accordingly.

Numerous requests are received for early issuance of pay checks to personnel leaving on vacation. Employees should be advised that pay checks will not be distributed prior to the above stated dates.

The final step in compiling the manual is to add any regulations on important points that are not covered by existing rules. The inclusion of each new rule should be carefully considered for justification.

Layout. A regular method of numbering, indexing, and filing regulations should be devised. The decimal system of numbering commonly used in compiling statutes is the most satisfactory because it permits the insertion of new material between existing regulations. Each regulation should specify by titles and dates any previous documents which it amends and restate them fully as amended, indicating by underlining or italics the new provisions. Every regulation should indicate the effective date, and a complete file of all types of written regulations should be kept in the chief administrator's office and in the city clerk's office.

A loose-leaf binder is an excellent method of filing the manual. If a loose-leaf binder is used, amended sections can be replaced immediately, the index can be revised periodically, and the manual will always be up to date.

Finally, arrangements should be made for keeping the manual up to date. Outmoded rules should be discarded or amended, and new ones added when needed.

Guidelines

If an administrative manual is to fulfill its purposes, some major guidelines should be recognized.

1. A manual should not be issued just for the sake of having a manual. A manual should be planned to serve a carefully defined set of objectives.

2. The manual should be carefully planned in terms of content, suitability for the city organization, and over-all objectives. The scope of the manual should be defined precisely. Are personnel regulations to go here or in a separate personnel manual? Is the manual intended only for department heads? Would some of the material on public relations be covered better in a separate employee handbook?

3. Provision should be made for regular revision to avoid obsolescence. The obsolete manual is of little or no real use to personnel and can lessen the value of the initial investment.

4. The preparation and revision of a manual should gain the cooperation of those most directly involved in its use — supervisory employees and department heads. Employees who feel left out of the preparation and revision of a manual will be less inclined to administer or use such a manual. Staff meetings devoted to eliciting the ideas of supervisory personnel on the manual — whether general or departmental — will gain supervisory cooperation and make the finished product more meaningful.

Further References. Copies of typical administrative manuals, including the six mentioned in this report, are available on loan to MIS subscribers.

Note. This report was prepared by Eleanor A. Schwab, staff member, the International City Managers' Association.

Appendix A

TABLE OF CONTENTS, MONROVIA, CALIFORNIA, ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL

ARTICLE I. Administration and Organization

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1. Processing legal deeds
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1. Essentials of correct telephone usage

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SECTION A. Personnel System

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Appendix B

INSTRUCTIONS ON HANDLING CITIZEN COMPLAINTS, MONROVIA, CALIFORNIA,
ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL

SUBJECT: Procedure in dealing with a Citizen complaint

When a citizen makes a complaint, it must be remembered that to him, his problem is a real and important one, regardless of what you may think of it.

When handling complaints, be polite and firm and never become angry or argue with the complainant, even if he is unreasonable, angry, and insulting toward you and the city. You cannot afford to take his comments personally. Always say "WE" instead of "I". Four suggestions for handling an unreasonable person are:

1. Let the person talk himself out. After a complainant tells you what is on his mind, he may calm down and listen to what you have to say.
2. In your friendliest manner tell the complainant that you are sorry that he has not received the service he needs, rather than trying to excuse or justify the actions of the city or yourself.
3. Offer to do what you can to solve the problem of the caller. If he wants to see the "Top Man" let him. This is no reflection on your own ability and may go far in calming him down.
4. Assure the man of the good will of the city government and when the conversation is ended thank him for calling.

Four important stages that should be included in every complaint procedure are:

1. Receive the complaint and record information pertinent to the complaint.
2. The assignment of responsibility for investigation and correction to the appropriate department or division official.
3. The follow-up on all complaints telling what the problem is and what action is taken. It is important that this stage be set down in written form in case reference is made to the problem at a later date.
4. Finally, notify the complainant as to what action has been taken on his complaint.

All department heads will acquaint their employees who deal with the public either over the telephone, at the desk or counter with the above procedure to be followed. This should be handled by an informal discussion at your individual department staff meetings rather than merely posting this notice on the bulletin board. This will give your employees an opportunity to get each department head's individual thinking as to how this policy is to be implemented by the particular departments.